**IN THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Please cancel claims 4, 5, 6, 15-18, and 37.

Please add new claims 38-44.

Please amend claims 7-14 as follows.

**STATUS OF CLAIMS**

Claim 4 **(canceled)**

Claim 5 **(canceled)**

Claim 6 **(canceled)**

Claim 7 **(currently amended)** The method according to claim 38, 40, 41, or 43 ~~of claim 4~~, wherein said cellular component is selected from the group consisting of DNA, protein, and carbohydrate.

Claim 8 **(currently amended)** The method according to claim 38, 40, 41, or 43 ~~of claim 4~~, wherein said RNase is encoded by a gene that is integrated into the genome of the cell producing the RNase.

Claim 9 **(currently amended)** The method according to claim 38, 40, 41, or 43 ~~of claim 4~~, wherein said RNase is non-specific.

Claim 10 **(currently amended)** The method according to claim 38, 40, 41, or 43 ~~of claim 9~~, wherein said ~~non-specific~~ RNase is RNase A, RNase M or RNase I

Claim 11 **(currently amended)** The method according to claim 38, 40, 41, or 43 ~~of claim 4~~, wherein expression of said RNase is transcriptionally, translationally, or post-translationally regulated.

Claim 12 **(currently amended)** The method according to claim 38, 40, 41, or 43 ~~of claim 11~~, wherein said RNase is overproduced.

Claim 13 **(currently amended)** The method of according to claim 38, 40, 41, or 43, ~~of claim 11~~, wherein expression of said RNase is inducible.

Claim 14 **(currently amended)** The method according to claim 38, 40, 41, or 43, ~~of claim 11~~, wherein expression of said RNase is constitutive.

Claims 15-37 **(canceled)**

Claim 38 **(new)** A method of preparing a substantially RNA-free cellular component comprising:

a) culturing a microbial cell producing said cellular component;

b) inducing the expression of an RNase in the cytoplasm of said cell in an amount sufficient to degrade substantially all of the RNA present;

c) lysing said cell; and

d) isolating said cellular component.

Claim 39 **(new)** The method of claim 38 further comprising incubating said cell to allow said RNase to digest said RNA.

Claim 40 **(new)** A method of preparing a substantially RNA-free cellular component comprising:

a) culturing a microbial cell producing the cellular component and an RNase, wherein said RNase is secreted into the periplasm of said cell;

b) lysing said cell to produce a cell lysate, wherein said cell lysate comprises said cellular component and sufficient RNase activity to degrade substantially all of the RNA present in said cell lysate;

c) incubating said cell lysate to allow said RNase to digest said RNA; and

d) isolating said cellular component.

Claim 41 **(new)** A method of preparing a substantially RNA-free cellular component comprising:

a) culturing a microbial cell producing said cellular component and an RNase in a medium, wherein said cellular component and said RNase are secreted out of the cytoplasm of the cell into the medium and further wherein said medium contains sufficient RNase activity to degrade substantially all of the RNA present in said medium; and

b) isolating said cellular component.

Claim 42 **(new)** The method of claim 41 further comprising incubating said medium to allow said RNase to digest said RNA.

Claim 43 **(new)** A method of preparing a substantially RNA-free cellular component comprising:

a) culturing a microbial cell producing the cellular component and an RNase, wherein said cellular component is secreted out of the cytoplasm of the cell;

b) lysing said cell to produce a cell lysate, wherein said cell lysate contains said cellular component and sufficient RNase activity to degrade substantially all of the RNA present in said cell lysate;

c) incubating said cell lysate to allow said RNase to digest said RNA; and

d) isolating said cellular component.

Claim 44 **(new)** The method of claim 43 wherein said RNase is secreted into the periplasm of the cell.